FEATURING BEST PRACTICES
OF STATE AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Improve Delivery of Social Services Programs to Clients

Management Assistance Program

Department of Social Services
implemented this best practice
in April 1999

Qualifying under the
Best Practices catalogue

1   Establish Direction
12 Determine requirements
121 Evaluate current performance

Best Practice Summary
(how it works, how you measure it)

The Management Assistance Program (MAP) gives the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) a broad, comprehensive review of the effectiveness and efficiency of social services programs at the state and local level. The MAP embraces a holistic approach to evaluating social service programs, in that it evaluates the ability to address client's total needs (such as achieving independence), vice merely evaluating a program's implementation. This evaluation is accomplished by assessing the attainment of overarching outcomes developed and promulgated by the DSS. The evaluation looks at processes and systemic issues, not isolated shortcomings or errors. This systemic approach focuses on quality through process improvement. Since the majority of DSS programs are delivered by local agencies, it is appropriate that MAP determine program effectiveness at the local agency delivery site.

The MAP is implemented by Management Assistance Program Administrators, under the direction of the DSS Inspector General, in partnership with the Department Regional Directors. The MAP Assessment Team includes separate program specialists (experts) and other specialized management staff. MAP Team members conduct interviews with the local staff and review case files. A process

improvement report is provided to the local agency and the state department with recommendations for the elimination of process barriers or process improvement. These recommendations include both state and local agency responsible actions. The MAP Administrator monitors follow-up actions for both state and local agencies and tracks state-wide and regional trends using a Microsoft Access database. These trends and the necessary supporting data assists the Commissioner, the Department, and local leaders as they improve existing programs and design future programs to help achieve the agency's stated outcomes.

Impact on the Process Organizational Performance (OUTCOMES)

Rather than an evaluation of individual program performance, i.e. policy and procedures, MAP evaluates the delivery of services required to meet the ultimate goal of customer independence, safe families, and focuses on process improvement to more effectively and efficiently achieve these goals. MAP identifies and documents barriers to improvement, proposes a plan of action, and raises the plan to the Commissioner level with recommended corrective action. The Commissioner forwards the recommendations to the individuals responsible for implementing and tracking any required corrective action.

Best Practice Qualification

This is the Commissioner's primary tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the State's social services programs throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This practice is based on current private industry standards for program evaluations. Additionally, it is similar to the program established by the Federal government as required by the Government Performance Results Act. This program uses broad outcomes and measures as a method to evaluate organizational progress in attaining these goals established through the strategic planning process. Prior to the MAP there was no comprehensive or standardized review of state and local social service programs.

For Additional Information

Virginia Department of Social Services
730 East Broad Street
Theatre Row
Richmond, Virginia   23219-1849

Wayne C. Chapman
(540) 857-7947
wcc996@piedmont.dss.state.va.us

Tom Kent

(804) 692-1912